



## AMERICAN SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

*Edward F. Peltier, Executive Director*

### Testimony Before the Appropriations Committee March 1, 2011

To: State Senator Toni N. Harp  
State Senator Andrew M. Maynard  
State Representative Andrew M. Fleischmann  
Members of the Appropriations Committee

From: Edward F. Peltier, Executive Director, American School for the Deaf

Good Evening. I am Edward F. Peltier, Executive Director of the American School for the Deaf. I am here to ask for your support of Governor Malloy's recommended budget increase of 3% for the American School for the Deaf (ASD).

Since 1817, the American School for the Deaf and the State of Connecticut have partnered through a state appropriation, to provide educational services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing infants, children, and their families throughout the state of Connecticut. Through these many years, ASD has ensured that this typically underserved population receives the education and skills they need to become productive, self-directed, tax-paying citizens.

In the past two fiscal years, ASD's appropriation was held at no increase. In addition, last year ASD received a reduction in funding of \$490,000. Despite rising costs and an increasingly more diverse and challenging population of students, ASD has continued to provide quality educational services to the students we serve.

Many of our students come from Connecticut's urban centers, are economically disadvantaged, and have significant special needs and language deficits. Over the years, the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in the state have changed markedly. At ASD, the average age of enrollment is twelve years of age, and students most often arrive with significant educational lags. 82% of our students have at least one other disability in addition to deafness, and 49% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch under federal guidelines. As part of the long-standing public-private partnership with the State, ASD has assisted the State Department of Education in expanding programs to serve this challenging population. Our PACES (Positive Attitudes Concerning Education and Socialization) program is the only program in the state for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students with behavior disorders. Without this program, many of these students would be hospitalized or institutionalized, resulting in significant additional costs to the State. While cost effective to the State and local school districts, these vital programs are expensive to operate and manage.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing children acquire language differently than their hearing counterparts, and language acquisition and literacy pose significant challenges for these students. Our state-certified faculty and staff have specific expertise in communication modalities, vocational and life skills training, in addition to training in traditional academics, and are able to identify and meet the needs of this special group of students. Many of our students attend ASD year round to minimize or eliminate academic and social regression. ASD has had a 0% dropout rate, and over 80% of our graduates pursue and are accepted to higher education organizations, vocational training, or employment opportunities.

The partnership between the American School for the Deaf and the State of Connecticut has stood the test of time. We have done everything in our power to provide cost-effective programming and excellence in education.

We understand the seriousness of the State's fiscal challenges, and our request is modest. We are an integral part of the State's overall educational delivery system and request consideration similar to that of the public school system.

Thank you.